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Interview with Matthew Gandy, author of *Natura Urbana: Ecological Constellations in Urban Space*

Batool, Tayeba

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In his new book, *Natura Urbana: Ecological Constellations in Urban Space* (MIT Press, 2022), Mathew Gandy explores urban nature as a multilayered material and symbolic entity. The book examines the articulation of alternative, and in some cases, counterhegemonic, sources of knowledge about urban nature produced by artists, writers, scientists, as well as curious citizens, including voices seldom heard in environmental discourse. The book is driven by Dr. Gandy's long-standing fascination with spontaneous forms of urban nature ranging from postindustrial wastelands brimming with life to the return of such predators as wolves and leopards on the urban fringe. Dr. Gandy develops a critical synthesis between different strands of urban ecology and considers whether "urban political ecology," broadly defined, might be imaginatively extended to take fuller account of both the historiography of the ecological sciences, and recent insights derived from feminist, posthuman, and postcolonial thought.

In this episode, Tayeba Batool talks to Dr. Mathew Gandy about his inspiration to write this book, and how an attention to spontaneous ecologies adds to the critical discourse on "new cultures of nature" and the "constellation" of diverse ecological relations, ideas, and assemblages. Moving beyond planned urban spaces (such as parks), Dr. Gandy argues that an attention to the "marginal or interstitial spaces of urban nature" or wastelands brings forward the most compelling assemblages of relations, biodiversity, and life in cities. The conversation also highlights the role of language in setting up taxonomic borders and ideological agendas for species and diversity, and advocates caution against global theories of urban change. Dr. Gandy also shares his thoughts on future direction of urban political ecology and how the book innovates across disciplines of botany, geography, cultural history, and urban studies.

(Source: New Books Network)

In this episode from the New Books Network podcast, Matthew Gandy is interviewed on his recent book, *Natura Urbana: Ecological Constellations in Urban Space*.

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